

My name is Olivia Cortez, I have been a bilingual pharmacy technician for 5 ½ years and recently became a qualified medical interpreter. In my industry, I've noticed the difficulty that our community has had to face when it comes to receiving medication, knowing what it's for and lacking the capability of reading the indications on their labeled medication bottles, this all due to it not being in a language they understand. Not only is this a risk for the patient, but can be very harmful as well.

I've gotten the opportunity to interpret Clinical Pharmacist appointments for our LEP diabetic and hypertension patients; two of which are very critical health conditions. Interpreting in these appointments has opened up a spectrum of knowledge and understanding of some of the barriers that our Spanish speaking only patients have to overcome when it comes to simply knowing how to take their medication. Not only does it make it complicated for the pharmacist to ensure the patient is taking the medication correctly, but ultimately comes down to patient care and patient safety. I've seen and spoken to LEP patients who look completely lost, who don't have full understanding of the indications on their medication bottle. However; some patients explain that they have family members at home that can help interpret their labeled bottles.

I often see English labeled medications go out to LEP patients, even though they say they have assistance at home to read off the labels for them. This is very common, but often times the family members are not always around to interpret indications when it comes time to take the medication. I speak from personal experience. I have a few LEP family members with serious health conditions who receive complex medication regimens, and the majority of their labels on their medication bottles are in English. When they have no one around, medications get mixed, they're unsure how to take, or they just don't take it at all, which according to them is the best and safest solution, but not always, as this can be as harmful.

I believe it's very important that labeled medication bottles are both in English and in a readable language for LEP patients. This can prevent serious consequences, such as taking the medication wrong, taking it at the wrong time of day, and many other indications that are highly important information that can easily be misinterpreted.

I've worked in a couple different pharmacies and not all have systematic methods for identifying linguistic needs. There have been occasions where I've had to hand write and translate on a separate piece of paper the indications on their medication bottles right after they have walked out the door and return with a confused look, not understanding why their labeled bottles are in English. Some pharmacies are fortunate enough to have bilingual staff on duty, but not every pharmacy has one at all time or have any at all. In my current job setting, I work with a high population of Spanish speaking only patients. It has made me become very

close to my community and has made me realize the importance and difference it makes to LEP patients to receive their medication in the language they understand.

I can't imagine going home, looking at my medication bottle and have it in a language I don't read or comprehend. This is just one of many barriers LEP patients face day to day. I think it is very important to meet every patients need and provide quality patient care to anyone and everyone receiving medications from the pharmacy. Many of these LEP patients struggle managing their medications as it is. If we can eliminate an extra barrier, why not do it. If every pharmacy is able to provide medication labeled bottles in both English and in the language of the LEP patient, there will be many preventable errors and prevention of misuse of medications